

# ***Historical Background***

The first parole law (Senate Bill 108, Chapter XXVI, Laws of 1899) authorized the Governor to parole certain inmates who had served at least one year of their sentence and who had previously not been incarcerated. A return to confinement was left to the sole discretion of the Governor. During the early 1900's, separate parole boards were established for the penitentiary and reformatory, but parole revocation remained under the sole discretion of the Governor. A central paroling authority was finally created in 1935 (House Bill 285, Chapter 114, Laws of 1935). This paroling authority was named the Board of Prison Terms and Paroles. Its primary duties under Washington's indeterminate sentencing system included fixing a minimum term of confinement, authorizing parole, and revoking parole, if necessary. The original Board consisted of three members, one secretary, and one state parole officer. By the mid-1960's, the Board had grown to approximately 150 employees in various offices throughout the state. In 1967, the parole field offices were transferred to the Department of Institutions and today it is known as the Office of Correctional Operations. Also in 1967, the Board moved its offices to the Capitol Center Building in Olympia.

The Sentencing Reform Act of 1981 (SRA) completely altered the sentencing structure in this state. The Act, effective July 1, 1984, established a determinate term of imprisonment for persons committing crimes after July 1, 1984. The Act replaced Washington's 1909 indeterminate (minimum and maximum) sentencing system, eliminated parole and, consequently eliminated the Board of Prison Terms and Paroles to be effective July 1, 1988. By 1986, it was apparent that some provision would have to be made for handling the indeterminate population, since the SRA was not retroactive. In early 1986, Substitute House Bill 1400 (Chapter 224, Laws of 1986) was enacted. This bill eliminated the Board of Prison Terms and Paroles as of July 1, 1986, and created the transition agency, the Indeterminate Sentence Review Board on that same date. The ISRB's role was to continue the functions of the old Board while at the same time assist in the transition process from the old indeterminate sentencing system to the determinate one. This process was to last until July 1, 1992. At that time, all of the Board's functions were to be turned over to the courts. In the spring of 1989, with the passage of Substitute House Bill 1457 (Chapter 259, Laws of 1989), the ISRB was again extended until 1998. In the spring and summer of 1996, a workgroup of affected agencies and stakeholders began meeting to make recommendations for carrying out the Board's functions after 1998, pursuant to RCW 9.95.0011(2). This workgroup ultimately recommended that the ISRB be extended once again. The Governor concurred and proposed legislation during the 1997 session to extend the Board for another decade. This legislation was ultimately passed as House Bill 1646 (Chapter 350, Laws of 1997).